940.345

WHY ITALY IS WITH THE ALLIES.

BY

ANTHONY HOPE.

LONDON:
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LTD.
1917

Spec Coll
D
520
I4H3

Walter Clinton Jackson Library
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
Special Collections & Rare Books

WORLD WAR I PAMPHLET COLLECTION

WHY ITALY IS WITH THE ALLIES.

"The power of this great national movement has fortunately been directed only to the securing of Italian liberty and not to the oppression of others. No doubt the reason of this is the fortunate fact that no alien race dwells beside the Italian within the boundaries of the Peninsula. There is no one for the Italian to oppress. But the result has been the sustained purity and idealism of patriotic emotion there, from the time of Mazzini's Young Italy to our own."

G. M. TREVELYAN.

Garibaldi and the Making of Italy. Page 294.

What may conveniently be called modern Italian history is summed up in the story of the great national movement to which the accomplished biographer of the Liberator refers in these words—the movement which inspired Italy to the task of winning her unity and her liberty. It matters little whether we say that her aspiration was liberty through unity, or unity through liberty. The two things were indissolubly combined—were indeed fused into one—in idea and in fact. Her dreamers and prophets on the one hand, her rulers and statesmen on the other—we may content ourselves with the representative names of Mazzini and Cavour—differed about many things—means and methods, times and seasons, internal political ideals and forms of government—but they never differed about the great twofold aspiration, which was but a single one. Italy must be united and Italy must be free. This was the aim—one and indivisible—which fired

the hearts and nerved the arms of Italian patriots from the beginning of the *Risorgimento* to the day on which Victor Emmanuel entered Rome. And beyond that day.

To an Italian patriot it could not be otherwise. Melancholy centuries had taught him that division spelt servitude, servitude to many masters, or perhaps, in the end, to one. Whether he approached the question from the idealistic point of view or from the severely practical—whether he were a patriotic dreamer or the most "real" of "real" politicians—the same conclusion was forced upon him. An united Italy alone could be a free Italy. An Italy united and free was at once the only Italy worth having and the only Italy possible to get. It alone satisfied the heart of the dreamer and the mind of the statesman. Italy was no Italy unless she were free; Italy could not be Italy at all, unless union gave her the strength to maintain and defend her freedom. Unless she possessed that strength, both unity and freedom were impossible; they could never be obtained or, at best, would be transitory and delusive. The old enemies who had parcelled her out, time and again, would be able and only too ready to repeat the operation. There was, then, nothing wild and extravagant in the vision of the dreamer, any more than there was anything unreasonable or aggressive in the demand of the statesman. They met in the end, and met on firm ground. In the end all that either asked was to possess his own house and to possess it in security.

There is one thing always to be remembered when we are considering Italian questions. This Italy, united and thereby free, is a great nation. There is perhaps no single criterion judging by which we can call a nation great; but what possible criterion does not united and free Italy satisfy?

Whether we judge by history and tradition, or by literature and art, or by territory, population, and resources, she is great. Greatness cannot give or increase the right to freedom—that depends upon other considerations—but it does and should extend the use to be made of freedom. Greatness brings responsibility. Italy is not only able, she is also bound, to make her voice heard in the world, to take her share in the government of it, to do her part in securing that right and not wrong ideals shall prevail, that a right and not a wrong conception of civilisation shall triumph. If she does not do these things, she is false to the heritage which she has reclaimed for herself by splendid effort. If they will properly conceive of their position, the Great Powers must see themselves as trustees of the welfare of the world. Italy is one of them. She is not one of the small nations who may properly, with full right and with no loss of dignity, ask to be guarded by civilisation; she is bound herself to be a guardian of it.

And yet, guardian as she was and was bound to be of civilisation—of right and justice—she was herself also a claimant, a petitioner at the bar of justice and of right. Her union was not complete, nor her freedom secure. She was not yet mistress of the whole of her house, and not quite safe in any part of it. And plainly it is difficult, with all the goodwill in the world, to be an efficient guardian unless you are yourself independent and secure. Italy did not feel herself, in a full measure, either. The work of the great national movement was still incomplete—incomplete alike for the dreamer and for the statesman.

Italia Irredenta—Italy Unredeemed—is a picturesque phrase, and picturesque phrases are apt to be suspected, often with justice. This one, how-

ever, happens to express a simple truth. There still exist, beyond the present political frontiers of Italy but contiguous with them, considerable territories inhabited by people Italian by nationality, language, history, and culture, even as the territories themselves are Italian by every canon of political geography. For centuries they were Italian; it is hardly more than a century ago that they were forcibly torn from Italy; there is no manner of doubt that they are Italian now in heart and feeling, and eagerly await the chance of becoming so again in fact.

More than this. Not only are these territories essential to the unity and completeness of Italy: they are no less indispensable to her security and to her freedom. Through the possession of these territories Austria holds the keys to Italy—the mountains from which her armies can descend on the Italian plains, the harbours whence her fleet can assail the eastern coast of Italy.

A hard situation for Italy to accept! And yet she did accept it—not indeed in the sense that she abandoned her rightful claims or the hope of realising them some day and by some means, but in the sense that she consented to their remaining in abeyance, and—so far from seeking to enforce them by her own arms, or by intrigue, or by concerting alliances against Austria—even became, in obedience to what she herself (or her rulers) considered to be paramount national interests, an ally of Austria and a participant in the Triple Alliance. There is no need to examine the soundness or unsoundness of her policy in taking this step. It is sufficient here to say that, having entered into this engagement, she loyally observed it so long as the Alliance which she had joined preserved—or could possibly be regarded as preserving—the

pacific and purely defensive character in the guise of which it had gained her adherence.

Thus matters stood with Italy when this war came upon the world, and whatever doubts might be felt in some quarters as to its origin and its originators, its nature and character, Italy felt none. She knew her allies too well, and had too good cause for her knowledge. She was not deceived by the pretext of Serajevo. How should she be, when her statesmen knew that Austria, or rather the Central Powers, had meditated just the same *coup* a year before, and had been turned from it only by her own refusal to be their accomplice? She knew that it was no defensive war. She said as much, and announced that she would be no party to it. Probably the other two hardly expected that she would, for this time they had not even taken the trouble, or observed the courtesy, of consulting her. Yet Austria, at least, was bound to consult her before she occupied, either permanently or even temporarily, a yard of Serbian territory; indeed, she was not merely bound to consult her; she was bound by the Treaty of Alliance to arrive with her at "a previous agreement on the principle of reciprocal consent" in regard to any advantages which she might derive from the alteration of the *status quo* in the Balkans. A like obligation would have lain on Italy, had she been the Power whose action altered the *status quo*.

Italy, then, declared herself neutral and, let it be remembered, by this neutrality rendered great service to the Allies and to the cause for which they were fighting. Even moderate Italian forces, arrayed on the side of the Central Powers, might have vitally affected the course of the war in 1914. But the moral service was no less valuable. Italy's neutrality was an independent support of the

Allies' contention, a clear and unhesitating condemnation of the real aggressors. "But," says an Italian writer, "Italy has not claimed and will not claim any gratitude from the Allies for this; to enter the war on the side of the Central Empires would have been something like a physical impossibility to us. It might have meant an internal revolution, if the Government had chosen to engage the nation on that course; but no Italian Government would in any case have made Italy the accomplice of a deliberate aggression on the peace of Europe, of a war waged for the purpose of imposing the hegemony of one nation on the world."* And it seems to be a fact that no Italian statesman of established rank urged his countrymen to such a course, a rather remarkable fact when we remember the extent to which Italy was permeated by German commercial interests and influences. But if Italy had allowed too much of her business to slip into German hands, she kept her honour and her conscience in her own.

For nine months Italy maintained her neutrality, and during this period she carried on negotiations with Austria on the subject of her unredeemed provinces and her frontiers. Into these we need not enter in detail, but something must be said, because some extreme idealists—at least we shall see some reason to think them extreme—have accused Italy of trying to make profit out of her principles, that is, out of the opportunity which her refusal to participate in an aggressive war gave her. There was a party in Italy which might perhaps fairly be considered as open to this charge (not, after all, as politics go, a very heinous one)—the party led by Signor Giolitti, one of her most

* Raffaello Piccoli. "Italy and the War." T. Fisher Unwin, London. Page 9.

influential statesmen. He advised Italy to pledge her continued neutrality, and in return for it to accept from Austria a *parecchio* or, as we might say, "something on account" of her historic claims. But this party, strong as it was in some influential quarters, upheld by powerful commercial and financial interests, and energetically backed by Germany and Austria, was not the party that won the day. Nations are judged not by the policies that they reject, but by those which they accept. The policy pursued by the Ministry of Signor Salandra, which was in power and which the nation was unmistakably resolved to keep in power, was something quite different.

It was the duty of responsible Italian statesmen to ensure that the country should come to no harm by its policy of neutrality, if that proved to be the policy for which Italy finally elected. The risks of it were considerable; they were seen and appreciated from the outset. If the Central Powers were victorious, how would Italy stand? Her gates were still open, or at least the keys of them were in Austria's hands. If the victorious Empires were minded to punish the desertion of their ally, the way was open. Here was the crux of the matter. What Italy demanded might be styled, in the veiled language of diplomacy, "compensations"—compensations due under the Treaty of Triple Alliance for Austria's disturbance of equilibrium in the Balkans. In reality, and above all for the purposes of these uneasy months, they were safeguards. Would Austria give—and would Germany guarantee—to Italy frontiers which she could defend, behind which she could be safe and free? The moment that the Triple Alliance ceased to be in effective force, then necessarily, and as it were automatically, the question of the unredeemed provinces,

which had been in abeyance, was raised at once and in an urgent form. For with the provinces went the frontiers—and with them both went also the question of strategic safety in the Adriatic Sea. Again, as in the earlier days of the great national movement, the two questions were but one. Again for Italy unity and freedom were indissolubly connected, and safety was the condition of both. How could Austria or her partner complain, when it was their own unprovoked action which roused the two-fold question from its troubled sleep? If Italy "grasped her opportunity," it was the only opportunity of national safety that she grasped—unless indeed she were even now to buy her safety at the price of becoming an accomplice in the crime of the war.

Well, Austria would give something—at least she would promise something; she would promise something some day; after the war was over would be the most convenient time. And Germany would guarantee her promise to give something some day—after the war, by preference. And what nation ought not to be happy, content, and confident with Austria's promise and Germany's guarantee? But events had happened in other parts of the world which made Italian statesmen pardonably shy of confiding in Austrian promises and even in German guarantees.

To these events, to this wider field, we must now turn, not indeed in order to re-tell, in any detail, the thrice-told story of horror and brutality, of utter lawlessness, and of an ambition which revealed itself as at once pitiless and unbounded, but to show how the revelation of these things—growing clearer day by day through the anxious and restless months of neutrality—affected the Italian people, and brought them, as surely and perhaps even more

quickly than it brought their statesmen, to a realisation of what was in truth at stake in the war and of what part it behoved Italy to play. Many Italians indeed there were who needed no such enlightenment, who saw from the beginning the bearing of the struggle, who knew by memory and tradition what the *tedeschi*—Germans and Austrians, for in Italy the one hated name is common to both—were and what manner of things they did. Early in the fight the name of Garibaldi—in itself a battle-cry—was written on the roll of the legions of France. From the beginning there was a strong party of generous and ardent, yet clear-sighted, men who saw that the fate of Italy was involved in the fate of Europe, and that the fate of Europe, yes, and of the world, was in question. "It was not to us," writes one of these, "who have of the *tedeschi* a recent and bitter experience, besides an intimate knowledge that spreads over centuries—that the revelation of the temper of the German people could come as a surprise. We knew what to expect from them, and here too we had our place assigned in advance. It was not a matter of choice."*

Many such voices made themselves heard. There was, God knows, no lack of texts to preach on, no want of material from which a moral might be drawn. Belgium, with its utter negation alike of law, of faith, and of humanity—with the rapine and flame and blood of Aerschot and Andenne, of Dinant and Louvain—Poland, Serbia, and invaded France—the staggering deed of shame that sank the *Lusitania*—if these things were to be done and suffered, civilisation was dead. Here was one issue which the course of the war revealed to Italy; she could not well have been expected to anticipate such things; nobody anticipated them. But seeing

* Raffaello Piccoli. "Italy and the War." Page 17.

is believing, and a new light dawned on the mind of Italy—Italy, the heir of Rome, who had given civilisation and law to Europe.

But another light dawned on her as the war went on. If German methods of warfare were thus rudely inconsistent with law, good faith, humanity, and civilisation—and on which of all these counts can any man of independent mind acquit Germany?—it was inevitable that Italy should ask herself, with more and more urgency, and more and more misgiving, whether German objects were any more consonant with the ideals—or rather with the most modest demands—of Western civilisation than her methods. Ruthless cruelties were based on—and almost avowedly defended by—arrogant pretensions. If civilisation was to be banished, freedom was to follow in its train. In his great speech, delivered at the Capitol in Rome on the 2nd June, 1915, Signor Salandra, then Italian Prime Minister, eloquently puts the case, and we may take his voice for that of his country. He puts Italy's case first, but passes on from that to embrace the European, the world-wide, issue. "Let us suppose," he says, "that Germany's guarantee was given with the full intention of carrying it out. Let us suppose that at the end of the war Germany would be in a position to keep her word—which is by no means certain—what would our position have been after this agreement? There would have been a new Triple Alliance, a renewed Triple Alliance, but under far other and far inferior conditions than had existed before, because there would have been one sovereign state and two vassal states. On the day on which one of the clauses of the Treaty was not fulfilled . . . . of whom could we ask redress? Should we have to apply to our common superior—to Germany?"

Then from this national point of view he rises to the international—not with bitterness towards Germany (with far less bitterness than history would justly warrant from Italy towards the *tedeschi*)—indeed with a generous recognition of her qualities, but with ardour and with clarity. "With all the respect due to learned, powerful, great Germany, that marvellous example of organisation and resistance, I must say, in the name of my country, no vassalage; no protectorate under anyone. The dream of a universal hegemony has been shattered. The whole world is risen up against it. The peace and civilisation of humanity must in the future be based on respect for existing nationalities, among which great Germany must take her place as an equal and not as a mistress." And we are told that this transition from the national to the international, from the Italian to the world-wide point of view, was greeted with loud applause by the audience assembled in the Capitol.

It might well be thus acclaimed: for the orator was faithfully reflecting the mind of his country, and truly expressing the change which had come over it during the first months of the war, and thanks to the revelation which the war had brought. For this transition, this progress, from the national to the international standpoint is exactly what had happened in Italy during the months of her neutrality, and sums up the history of that period. Or the same thing may be better put by saying that Italy had come to realise that the national and the international were bound up together, just as, in the old days of the great movement of the re-birth of Italy, unity and freedom had been bound up together for Italy herself. The concrete objectives which she set before her, when she entered on the war, might be stated in terms of national aspira-

tions and of military security, but they transcended these limits. To Italy's now fully awakened consciousness these things, still cherished and necessary in themselves, took on a yet higher and wider significance. They were seen as the conditions—and the only possible conditions—on which Italy could share in the freedom and civilisation of the world, and could take a worthy part in preserving and maintaining them. No longer merely harboured as national aspirations for the fulfilment of which Italy was content to wait and hope—even as France had schooled herself to wait and hope in peace for the return of her lost provinces—they were perceived now to be at once a national necessity and a European necessity, essential to Italy's independent life, essential to Europe's freedom.

And they could be realised only by entering the war on the side of the Allies. To this conclusion also Italy had been driven—in part by the course of her negotiations with Austria, no less powerfully by what she had seen in the larger theatre of events. She saw now that she could no longer rely on her rights, that she could no longer afford to repose a passive confidence in what might come to her in a future when the claims of nationality and freedom should be better recognised. She had witnessed plain proofs of the emptiness of such a confidence. This is the Nemesis which waits on German principles and methods. Repudiating right, Germany makes others despair of resting their case on right. Suddenly seizing for herself her military opportunity, she makes others afraid to wait for their peaceful opportunities. Appealing to force only—as sole method, as paramount justification, as religion itself—she makes of no avail the appeal to anything else. How can she be allowed to complain of the arbitrament which she herself has not

only challenged but glorified? She is contemptuous of anything but power—and of all kinds of power save one. To that one power of the sword she compels all nations to appeal—yet with the hope and the purpose that it may not stand thus with the world for all time. But for the moment so it does stand, and by May, 1915, Italy had realised it.

"Each for all, all for each, all confident that by our supreme efforts we shall hand over to the generations that are to come an Italy more complete, more powerful, more honoured; an Italy who shall take her seat in the comity of nations, not as a vassal, not as a minor, but secure within her natural boundaries; an Italy who shall return to the fruitful rivalries of Peace, the champion, as she has ever been, of liberty and justice in the world."

In these words her Prime Minister defined the aims that Italy set before her when she entered the war. They are national, but they are also more than national. In what Italy seeks, she seeks only that which is her own and without which she cannot be secure. And, if it be given her to attain what she seeks, she engages to use it as a free and equal member of the comity of free and equal nations, and for the better advancement of the cause of liberty and justice in the world. She is true to the traditions of the great national movement—to the aims of Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Cavour. She is true to them, but she passes beyond and even above them. She sees herself not only as the free nation which those great men aspired to make her, but as a member of the community of free nations, a place that she will make for herself.

Is there anything unworthy in this—anything that can support a charge of calculated ambition and rapacity? There is no substance in the accusation. The purity and idealism which

inspired her struggle for unity and freedom are alive in her still, but they have taken on a broader view and a higher vision. For the freedom of her unredeemed provinces Italy had been content to wait. For the freedom of the world she saw that she must strike. By her great decision she did honour to herself and to the cause to which she gave allegiance.

Printed in Great Britain by Hayman, Christy & Lilly, Ltd. London.